

## PUBLIC NOTICE OF A PROPOSED SOLE SOURCE AQUIFER DESIGNATION

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, REGION 6  
FIRST INTERSTATE BANK TOWER  
1445 ROSS AVENUE  
DALLAS, TEXAS 75202-2733

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 6, announces the receipt of a petition requesting the designation of an aquifer system in Santa Fe County, New Mexico as a sole or principal source of drinking water and opens a public comment period to request information about the area, identified as follows:

Aquifer: La Cienega Valley Area Aquifer

Location: North Central New Mexico, North Central  
Santa Fe County

The Sole Source Aquifer (SSA) program was established under Section 1424(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) of 1974. This section authorizes the EPA Administrator to determine that an aquifer is the "sole or principal" source of drinking water for an area. After such a determination is made, no commitment for Federal financial assistance (through a grant, contract, loan guarantee, or otherwise) may be entered into for any project which the Administrator determines may contaminate such an aquifer through a recharge zone so as to create a significant hazard to public health. The EPA may negotiate modifications of such projects in order to protect water quality in the aquifer. Information on the SSA program is available at <http://www.epa.gov/region6/water/> under the heading "Source Water Protection."

A final decision to approve or deny the petition for the La Cienega Valley Area Aquifer as a Sole Source Aquifer will be made after the close of the comment period, which ends at close of business on March 5, 2001.

All persons, including the petitioner, who wish to comment on the proposed designation may do so by submitting comments, along with their name and address, to the EPA address shown below. All written comments must be postmarked by March 5, 2001, to be considered in formulating a final decision. Written and oral comments may also be delivered at the public hearing described below.

The La Cienega Valley Citizens for Environmental Safeguards has petitioned for designation of the La Cienega Valley Area Aquifer. The proposed designation covers a roughly circular area approximately 20 miles in diameter which includes Eldorado and La Cienega in the south, and the city of Santa Fe on the north, and, additionally, includes a strip of land two miles wide along the Santa Fe River extending 8 miles upstream from McClure Reservoir.

To qualify for designation, the aquifer must supply at least half of the drinking water consumed in the proposed area. Also, under EPA guidance there should be no economically feasible alternative source of drinking water which can supply more than half of the drinking water in the area. The guidance also notes that the proposed boundaries should define a distinct aquifer or part of an aquifer which is hydrogeologically separated from other portions of the same aquifer. The EPA solicits comments on these topics.

An EPA representative will informally discuss the petition and the Sole Source Aquifer program at a town meeting scheduled from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 15, 2001, in the Santa Fe Public Library, La Farge Branch, Small Conference Room, 1730 Llano, Santa Fe, New Mexico. A public hearing is also scheduled at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 15, 2001, at the Santa Fe Community College, Jemez Room #1, 6401 Richards Avenue, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Written and verbal comments regarding the petition will be received by EPA at the hearing. Anyone needing special provisions at the hearing site due to disabilities (i.e., interpreters for the hearing impaired, wheelchair access, etc.), is requested to contact the EPA, within ten (10) working days of the hearing date, at the EPA address below or at the following e-mail address: [howard.minnie@epa.gov](mailto:howard.minnie@epa.gov) or Ms. Minnie Howard at (214) 665-7189.

Written comments, requests for information regarding the decision process, and requests for copies of the fact sheet (description of the proposed designation) should be sent to EPA Region 6 at the address shown below. Information on this petition may also be obtained by contacting Minnie Howard at the number listed above.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region 6  
Source Water Protection Branch (6WQ-S)  
1445 Ross Avenue  
Dallas, Texas 75202-2733

The administrative record for this petition decision is available for review beginning January 16, 2001, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, for the extent of the comment period, at the address above. A copy of the petition is also available for review at the Santa Fe Public Library, La Farge Branch during normal business hours at the following location:

Santa Fe Public Library  
La Farge Branch  
1730 Llano Street  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501  
(505) 955-4862

Pertinent EPA comment and public hearing procedures may be found in 40 CFR §124.10 and §124.12.

The EPA will notify the applicant and each person who has submitted written and oral comments of the final designation decision. The final decision will also be published in the Federal Register.